

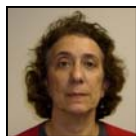


Newsletter of the Center for Teaching Excellence, Bronx Community College, CUNY SPRING 2009

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FACULTY DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Dr. Marianne Pita
Acting Faculty Director
Center for Teaching Excellence

Center for Teaching Excellence – Spring 2009 Update

First I would like to thank Dr. Harriet Shenkman for the opportunity to serve as Acting Director of the CTE this Spring, and the staff for being so willing to help me learn the ropes. This semester, the CTE will offer a full roster of activities and workshops, including Adjunct Workshops, Quantitative Reasoning Seminars and New Faculty Get-togethers, culminating in a New Faculty Salon.

In November, we began to sponsor **Brown Bag Discussions**, small open-ended groups that meet over lunch, to talk pedagogy. This initiative will continue this spring; if you have an idea for a topic that you think would interest your colleagues, please get in touch with me and we would be happy to put you on the schedule.

The **Continuum of Greatness Project** will involve four new participants—Susan Amper and Christina Sassi-Lehner from the English Department, James Freeman from Social Sciences and Seher Aktamkurtur from Biology—doing research on a number of the Great Americans in the Hall of Fame. In addition, students from Lisa Amowitz's graphic design class have created posters with images of the Hall of Fame that illustrate the theme of the Continuum of Greatness. These posters will be on display this Spring in the CTE, so stop by and see what our students are up to.

Donna Kessler-Eng is serving as Acting Director of the Learning Communities this Spring. There are six blocks, and we welcome several new faculty members, including Andrea Parmigiani of the English Department and Nikos Apostolakis from Mathematics and Computer Science.

The best way to understand the wealth of activities and resources available at the CTE is to check out our newly updated website at <http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/CenterForTeaching/?page=home>. Look at the Virtual Hall of Fame for Women, or the Learning Communities, or the biographies of selected figures from the Hall of Fame in the Continuum of Greatness Initiative. As always, your suggestions and your participation are welcome.



Upcoming Meetings and Events

Learning Communities:
Feb. 5, 26, Mar. 12, Apr. 2, 30

CTE Advisory Board:
2-4 pm
Feb. 26, Mar. 19, Apr. 30

**Biology/Chemistry
Quantitative Literacy Initiative :**
Feb. 23, Mar. 30, Apr. 27,
May 11

**Continuum of Greatness
Project:**
Feb. 5, Mar. 5, 26, June. 3

**Adjunct Faculty
Development:**
Mar. 18, Apr. 21

New Faculty Salon
Apr. 3, 30

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CTE Day Celebration

By Dr. Christine Sassi-Lehner

On November 6, 2008, The Center for Teaching Excellence showcased faculty and student work celebrating BCC's Hall of Fame for Great Americans and focusing on the impact these honored individuals continue to wield in many different areas of American culture. For the past year CTE has supported various initiatives for faculty and student research about Hall of Famers that highlight this "Continuum of Greatness" in an effort to bring to life the people and the ideas enshrined in this historic monument.



Dr. Harriet Shenkman, President Carolyn Williams, and Senior Vice President George Sanchez kicked off the proceedings in the auditorium of the Gould Memorial Rotunda. The five faculty members who had participated in the Continuum of Greatness Initiative delivered their illuminating Power Point presentations. Dr. Katie Culkin of the History Department spoke of the Quaker poet and ardent abolitionist John Greenleaf Whittier; Dr. David Gordon of the History Department focused on the legacy of Peter Cooper, inventor of the first locomotive, founder of Cooper Union University, and presidential candidate; Dr. Shylaja Akkaraju of the Biology Department highlighted Thomas Alva Edison's contributions as an entrepreneurial inventor who paved the way for i-pods; and Dr. Vincent Bonelli of the History Department spoke of the great theologian and speaker Jonathan Edwards and his contributions to religion in American life.

BCC students presented the projects they had worked on during the fall semester. Dr. Vaso Thomas of Social Sciences, Dr. Nelson Reynoso of Counseling, and Dr. Grace Cukras of Education & Reading introduced and showed the digital storytelling project that their Learning Community students created. The theme of their three linked courses was "One World, One Love," and students presented the story of their bonding as a community of learners as they researched Hall of Famer Jane Addams and filmed their project "Creating a Learning Community and Examining the Community of Social Activist Jane Addams (1860-1935) at the Hull House in Chicago, Illinois." Education interns working with Ms. Diane D'Alessio of Reading and Education, shared their Power Point presentations of the lesson plans they had created for Fourth and Fifth graders focusing on the groundbreaking 2008 presidential election. Their presentation "The Historical Significance of Election 2008: Gender and Racial Equity from Susan B. Anthony to Senator Hillary Clinton and Governor Sarah Palin, from Thoreau to Dr. Martin Luther King to Senator Barack Obama. 18,000,000 Cracks and the Ceiling is Still Not Broken. What Will it Take for the Glass to Shatter?" shared the engaging classroom activities and assignments that they devised to make elementary school students understand and appreciate the wider context of the election's outcome.



The showcase concluded with a talk and PowerPoint presentation by a future contender for the Hall of Fame, BCC alumnus and award-winning artist Ezequiel Jimenez. Ms. Jan Robertson, Director of the Writing Center, introduced Mr. Jimenez, this year's featured speaker in the Student Autobiography series sponsored by the Writing Center. Mr. Jimenez shared the inspiring tale of his travels between the Dominican Republic and the United States, and his trajectory "From Dishwasher to Artist and Cultural Activist." He explained that in his art he seeks to "map out for the casual observer a spiritual awakening." His talk was followed by a lively question and answer session in the crowded auditorium. Mr. Jimenez is a living breathing example of the "Continuum of Greatness" theme for this generation, and it seemed fitting that the day end on a forward looking note.

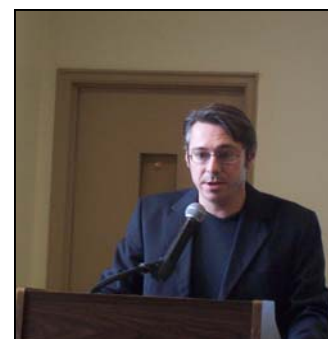
BRONX COMMUNITY COLLEGE FRESHMAN LEARNING COMMUNITIES

by Dr. Donna Kessler-Eng, Acting Director, Spring 2009

Our Learning Community Program offers students an integrated educational experience that strengthens their academic skills. At BCC, a learning community is a coordinated studies program that includes courses in developmental reading, writing, or math, college-level courses in various disciplines, and a counseling component. Each of our six learning communities utilizes a team-teaching approach to both planning and instruction, and each learning cluster has a common course theme. Our learning communities offer students the opportunity to become part of a larger intellectual environment, one in which students feel they truly belong, and one in which they can succeed as both students and individuals.

This semester, we will continue to provide our students with integrated curricula, counseling, and large group activities that will foster academic engagement and personal growth. Before the spring semester begins, our dedicated learning community counseling team will work to ensure that our learning community students are well-prepared for their first semester at BCC. At the beginning of the semester, Dr. Ted Ingram will lead our Learning Community Orientation, a gathering at which all six learning community clusters participate in team-building and academic goal-strengthening activities. During the semester, individual faculty teams will meet weekly and all of our learning community groups will meet monthly to discuss teaching and learning objectives for the semester.

At the end of every semester, students and faculty gather together to celebrate our students' academic success and to showcase students' best creative work of the semester. Last semester, our Learning Community Showcase had the theme of "e-Merging Stories." Students presented digital stories that were representations of their individual intellectual and personal growth. This semester, we will once again carry on the tradition of celebrating student success in a Learning Community Showcase.



Faculty and Counselor Participants 2007-2008

Grace Cukras (Reading);
 Vaso Thomas (Social Science);
 Nelson Reynoso (Counseling);
 Roman Kossak (Mathematics);
 Georgene Osborne (Reading);
 Melissa Gonzales (Counseling);
 Donna Kessler-Eng (English);
 Gilbert Marzan (Social Science);
 Eldiane Elmeus (Counseling);
 Nikos Apostolakis (Mathematics);
 Elizabeth Smith (English);
 Ted Ingram (Counseling);
 Luis Fernandez (Mathematics);
 Neal Phillip (Environmental Science);
 Karla Morales (Counseling);
 Andrea Parmegiani (ESL);
 Jordi Getman (History);
 Victor Rodriguez (Counseling);



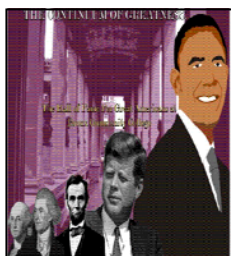
Creating Student Success
 One Cluster At A Time !

Continuum of Greatness Poster Contest by Dr. Harriet Shenkman

The Continuum of Greatness Project sponsored by CTE is a multi-faceted attempt to engage our students' deep learning by focusing on various aspects of the national landmark Hall of Fame for Great Americans. After two summer seminars sponsored by NEH, faculty from English, History, Biology and Political Science have been engaged in researching selected honorees and creating materials that can be used in the classroom. The research is ongoing, and faculty in the Department of Education and Reading have been the first to work on incorporating this research into their courses.

Last semester, in conjunction with the Office of Student Life, a poster contest was initiated. Students were challenged to create a poster that represented the idea of the continuum of greatness, incorporating notions of the past and the present. Professor Lisa Amowitz's Digital Illustration class took up the challenge. The four criteria for selecting three winners (three hundred dollar prize each) were: express the idea of the continuum of greatness; follow directions given by the professor; meet technical standards and have aesthetic appeal. President Carolyn Williams, Melissa Kirk (Director of Student Life), Harriet Shenkman (Director of CTE), Lisa Amowitz (Professor, Art and Music), Vincent Bonelli (Professor, History) and Chrystal Joseph (student) served as judges.

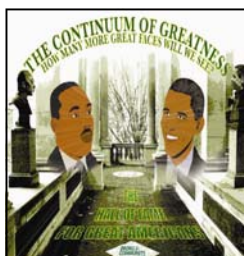
All agreed that the student work was remarkable, and all twelve posters submitted would be displayed in an exhibit by CTE and Student Life. The three student winners were Allie Rodriguez, Julio Torres, Jr. and Carlos Rodriguez. Professor Amowitz was very pleased with the results. She said, "The biggest challenge for the students was to first understand the criteria of the contest and then translate that into a visual concept that was quickly recognizable to its target audience. It was a real exercise in critical thinking and the learning curve was high, as they had little prior experience. However, they dived into the project with gusto—sketching, planning, discussing, and I was pleased to see they had a full grasp of the task at hand. In the end, all the students had a great experience, learning about the Hall of Fame and its amazing roots while also developing the tools of effective visual communication.



Allie Rodriguez



Julio Torres



Carlos Rodriguez

Scholarship Corner by Dr. Marianne Pita

Faculty active in the CTE have found venues to present their work at conferences and to publish the results of their research; thus their teaching practice has enriched their scholarship. In this corner we would like to publicize the work you have done that has a wider audience, outside BCC. Marcia Jones, Nursing Department, participated in a 2006 – 2007 Perkins funded project that used problem-based learning to improve student performance. Ms. Jones has presented her educational research at Gateway Technical College, Wisconsin and published "Developing Clinically Savvy Nursing Students: An Evaluation of Problem-Based Learning in an Associate Degree Program" in Nursing Education Perspectives. If you have a conference presentation or an article that grew out of your work at CTE, send us a copy.

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